XIII. Setting up photopoints

Photopoints can be valuable measures of management change. They indicate success, failure, or large scale changes. They can be a fairly simple way to document projects. Take photos before and after management occurs (for example before a burn, before brush was removed, etc.) to document changes. You may want to take them once a year during peak vegetation growth (late July- October).

To create a photopoint, pound a t-post into the ground, put flagging on it for visibility, take a GPS point at the location, write down the coordinates and other comments, and take four photos, one in each cardinal direction.

If necessary use an aerial photo of the site to mark photopoint locations and any helpful trails nearby. Place your points at easy to access locations so they are not hard to get to. Or locate them in an area where you expect to see change due to your restoration efforts.

Construct a target board (See Figure 4) for reference in the photos. It should be 1.5m by 10cm. Color it with black and white spray paint, alternating every 0.5m with white on the bottom. This black and white will indicate vegetation height in the photo. Drill four holes on one end, then insert two wires which form two loops on one side of the board. Tighten the wires to be a snug fit with the board and a metal rod. The rod acts as a pole for the board. It can be inserted into the ground and then the board slid down into the metal rod so the board stands up. Place the board 10 m away from the photopoint post in each cardinal direction and focus the center of the picture on the top part of the board. Instead of using a tape measure each time (inconvenient and likely inaccurate due to abundance of brush in some locations, you may want to use a pacing system to approximate distance with acceptable accuracy).

Name photos accordingly - Rock (site name) 3 (photopoint number) S (direction photo taken) 10-11-11 (date). So this photo would be called Rock3S10-11-11.

Taking pictures in four directions based only on a compass does not work. You might be able to see some similar features in the photo, but they aren't always comparable. To combat this, it is necessary to carry with you printed copies of past photos so you can line up trees, topography, etc. to get the picture most closely related to past pictures. A monopod or other stabilizing device is helpful to ensure the camera is stable and the pictures are all taken at the same height. Other stabilizing devices could include shelf systems- drilling a fixed bracket into a tree for example.

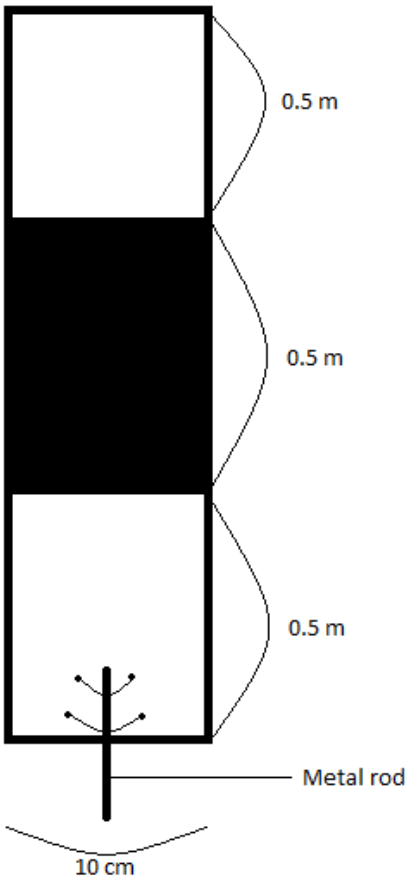

Figure 4. Diagram of target board used for taking photopoint pictures.